

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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MC-01 EB-07 IO-10 RSC-01 /067 W

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R 171715Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1755

INFO AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 0530

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBFOR, ML, UV

SUBJECT: MALI-UPPER VOLTA BORDER DISPUTE: THE FRENCH POSITION

REF: STATE 006820

PARIS FOR MELONE

SUMMARY: FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO IVORY COAST SAYS FRENCH ARCHIEVES ON BOUNDARY DISPUTE WILL BE OPEN TO QUADRIPARTITE COMMISSION'S RESEARCH. HE ASSUMES COMMISSION WILL ULTIMATELY RECOMMEND TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE ON THEORY THAT BORDER WAS DISPUTED AT TIME OF INDEPENDENCE AND IS ONLY NOW BEING SET RIGHT. HE SAYS FRENCH HAVE NEITHER EMBARGOED NOR STEPPED UP ARMS SALES TO DISPUTANTS, THAT SOVIETS ARE RELUCTANT TO PROVIDE MORE TO MALI AND THAT, IN HIS VIEW, U.S. SHOULD NOT GET INVOLVED IN ARMS SALES TO UPPER VOLTA. HE SUGGESTED AMERICAN EMBASSY MIGHT SEEK IVORIAN VIEWS ON ARMS SALES.

1. FOLLOWING UP ON REFTTEL, ON JANUARY 16 I CALLED ON FRENCH
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AMBASSADOR JACQUES RAPHAEL-LEYGUES, WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIRJ

DCM, FOR "TOUR D'HORIZON" ON THE BORDER DISPUTE.

2. FRENCH AMBASSADOR, WHO HAS BEEN AT POST SINCE 1963, WAS FORMERLY SENIOR FRENCH NAVAL OFFICER, AND ARDENT GAULLIST, EXPRESSED VIEW "AS OLD LOGISTICS EXPERT" THAT EVEN IF EITHER SIDE GETS MORE ARMS THEY COULD NOT FIGHT VERY LONG FOR LACK OF PETROLEUM. HE SAID FRENCH WERE CONTINUING EXISTING ARMS CONTRACTS WITH TWO COUNTRIES AND HAD NEITHER EMBARGOED DELIVERIES NOR MADE NEW AGREEMENTS SINCE HOSTILITIES BEGAN.

3. HE SAID THAT FRENCH ARCHIVES WERE OPEN TO RESEARCH ON BORDER ISSUES AND THAT HE ASSUMED THE RESEARCH WOULD BE DONE BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE QUADRIPARTITE COMMISSION RATHER THAN BY THE DISPUTANTS. I ASKED WHETHER RESEARCH WOULD NOT PROVE THAT UPPER VOLTA WAS CORRECT AND HE AGREED, BUT SAID HE THOUGHT COMMISSION WOULD THAN FIND SOME WAY TO MAKE SMALL TERRITORIAL CONCESSION TO MALI AS A MEANS OF COMPROMISE. I SAID I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE CONTRARY TO SPIRIT OF OAU POLICIES WHICH CALLED FOR NO REPEAT NO BOUNDARY REVISIONS AMONG INDEPENDENT AFRICAN STATES. TYPICALLY CARTESIAN REPLY WAS THAT THIS WAS DIFFERENT, SINCE THE BOUNDARY ITSELF HAD BEEN IN DISPUTE AT TIME OF INDEPENDENCE AND THIS WOULD MERELY BE SETTling A PRE-INDEPENDENCE DISPUTE.

4. AS A SIDE LIGHT TO THE DISPUTE, FRENCH AMBASSADOR REMINDED ME THAT IVORIAN PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY HAD BEEN FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEMBER FOR AN AREA WHICH INCLUDED PRESENT IVORY COAST AND PRESENT UPPER VOLTA, BUT THAT IN 1947 THE FRENCH MRP PARTY (CATHOLIC) "TOOK UPPER VOLTA AWAY FROM HIM" TO CHASTISE HIM FOR HAVING DIVORCED HIS FIRST WIFE. IT WAS AT THAT POINT THAT UPPER VOLTA BECAME A SEPARATE COLONY. HE AND I AGREED THAT HOUPHOUET'S FORMER ROLE IN UPPER VOLTA WAS ONE OF THE REASONS HE HAD MAINTAINED A LOW-PROFILE POSITION IN THE DISPUTE (SEE ABIDJAN 10182).

5. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR SAID THAT MALI WAS HAVING DIFFICULTY GETTING ADDITIONAL ARMS FROM THE SOVIETS, WHO ARE RELUCTANT TO MEDDLE IN THE PRESENT DISPUTE. HE ADDED THAT HE DID NOT THINK IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA FOR THE U.S. TO SELL ARMS TO UPPER VOLTA, AS IT WOULD ESCALATE THE STRUGGLE AND LEAD TO A MALIAN REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL ARMS FROM US OR ELSE HURT OUR RELATIONS

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WITH MALI.

6. I ASKED WHAT HE THOUGHT THE IVORIAN ATTITUDE WOULD BE TO AMERICAN ARMS BEING SOLD TO THE UPPER VOLTANS. HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW BUT THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA FOR ME TO TRY TO FIND OUT FROM PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET OR OTHER SENIOR IVORIAN OFFICIALS.

7. AS TO THE FRENCH BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE IN THE DISPUTE, I RECEIVED VAGUE AND NONCOMMITTAL ANSWERS. THIS EVEN LED THE AMBASSADOR TO INQUIRE WHETHER I WAS ACCREDITED TO UPPER VOLTA AND/OR MALI AS WELL AS IVORY COAST, TO WHICH I OF COURSE REPLIED IN NEGATIVE BUT SAID I WAS MERELY ANXIOUS TO COMPARE NOTES WITH HIM ON THIS SENSITIVE PROBLEM. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE FRANKNESS OF OUR DISCUSSIONS AND MY INITIATIVE IN COMING TO HIM. HE ASKED , SPECIFICALLY, THAT HIS VIEWS NOT RPT NOT BE SHARED WITH AFRICANS.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: DOES DEPARTMENT WISH THIS POST TO FOLLOW UP WITH GOIC ON ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD U.S. ARMS SALES TO DISPUTANTS? SMITH

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